Preview Of 1972 Football Season—Inside Today

The Rolling Meadows
HERALD
PADDOCK PUBLICATIONS

Cloudy

TODAY: Mostly cloudy, chance of showers; high in middle 70s.

WEDNESDAY: Partly sunny, warm and humid; high in mid 80s.

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Richard Johnson—He Traveled Country With McGovern

by TONI GINNETTI

To most Americans, a presidential campaign is that unique phenomenon occurring every four years when paid political announcements dominate the air waves, and bumper stickers and precinct captains appear everywhere telling you to vote for their man.

That mental picture will probably never occur again to Richard Johnson, the Rolling Meadows man who last week traveled with the campaign entourage of Democratic presidential hopeful George McGovern and will be the subject of an upcoming television program.

Johnson, who seems to have become somewhat of a champion of middle class America, was selected for the second time this year by the National Public Affairs Center for Television (NPACT) to participate in the preparation of television programs dealing with the "average American."

The first program, aired in February, dealt with some of the economic woes currently plaguing middle class America.

"A FEW OF THE things that we stated in that show apparently came true," Johnson laughed, "because about 10 days ago the producer of the show called my wife and asked if I would like to take part in another one."

The latest "Johnson feature," which will be seen Sept. 20 on WTTW-TV (Channel 11), will follow Johnson for a behind-the-scenes look at a presidential campaign and candidate as viewed through the eyes of "the average man."

"They told me the purpose of the show was to report on what I saw and heard, and to state my viewpoints," Johnson said. "You might say it was to be more or less a campaign as seen through the eyes of the small guy."

"It's just amazing what the average man doesn't know about what goes on behind the scenes," Johnson said. "I mean after the speeches, rushing back to the plane and so on.

"There's so much hub-bub, but results come from it. I've come to call it 'disorganized organization'," he laughed. "Everybody seems to be running around, but they get things done."

In the five days that Johnson spent with the campaign, he crisscrossed the country, visiting ten cities, from Los Angeles to Superior, Wis. He said aides told him the trip covered almost 8,500 miles.

"It was quite strenuous," Johnson admitted. "Usually I didn't get to bed before midnight."

Two personal interviews with McGovern were included in Johnson's schedule.

"ONE INTERVIEW was informal and we discussed football, among other things," Johnson said. "In the other interview, the shorter one, we discussed what I guess you would call 'Nitty gritty' politics. That interview will be, I believe, the focal point of the television show."

Johnson said he found McGovern to be a "dedicated" man who likes to talk to people.

"He left the thought in my mind that he is just as good, in my opinion, as any available Democrat, with the exception of perhaps (Sen. Edward M.) Kennedy," Johnson said. He said, too, that, as political polls seem to indicate, McGovern "has a long way to go" to defeat President Nixon.

One incident during the trip stands out in his mind. "In Albuquerque, I had a room overlooking the hotel swimming pool. Being a Saturday, McGovern had been given the day off by his staff.

"I looked out my window and I saw McGovern sitting at the pool side in his swimming trunks, relaxing just as if you or I would," Johnson said. "But the thing that really impressed me was that all around the pool area, sitting under the umbrella tables, were the secret service agents."

While he describes the trip in glowing terms as "a fantastic experience," Johnson says he hopes his television escapades don't become a regular event.

"Some of the reporters asked me if I was going to be taking a trip with President Nixon next for 'equal time,' but that's not what this was about," he said. "It was just arranged for me to have the opportunity to travel as an average guy on a presidential campaign."

Richard Johnson